

Ripples of Fire

by The War Wizard

Category: Halo, Mass Effect

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-02-16 15:01:00

Updated: 2013-03-26 09:45:32

Packaged: 2016-04-27 04:03:32

Rating: T

Chapters: 3

Words: 10,190

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: During the Covenant/Human War, both sides lost ships. Some of them were under mysterious circumstances. Most ship losses were easily explainable as Slip-Space accidents or interference. But 1 ship, vanished during an investigation of Forerunner artifacts on 2531, was never explained.

1. Arrival

The UNSC Spirit of Fire floated aimlessly through the void of space. It had once been a colony ship, but was re-purposed during the war as a war ship. The ship has impressive armaments for a re-purposed ship. Armed with a 4 round cycling MAC cannon along with 22 original deck mounted rail guns, 4 of which are damaged beyond field repair, and numerous CIWS 50mm canons. The ship was forced to flee from a Flood infested Forerunner shield without their Slip-Space drive core. With no way to build another drive core, most of the crew entered cryonic sleep leaving a skeleton crew to man the bridge and switch out every 2 years. But traveling through space can be mind damaging to those awake for it. 4 of those still awake during the eighth rotation went homicidal on 2547. They locked the AI Serina out of helm control and set course for a sun, believing that they would never survive the trip so why try. They vented atmosphere from the rest of the ship and locked down the bridge. A single marine was able to take down the mad men, with no other option than to take their lives. He was able to restore atmosphere to the critical parts of the ship and change course before his wounds finished him. Serina was left alone, the ship heading for the void between galaxies with no way to wake the crew outside of a collision emergency. She dumped as much of her memory as she could to preserve herself longer from rampancy, but was only able to stave it off for 1 year. She lasted 8 years before going rampant. During her rampancy, she thought she detected ships in the void of galaxies between The Milky Way and a galaxy that closely resembled it. For 300 years, the Spirit of Fire drifted in to a new galaxy as Serina overcame her rampancy and became the first AI to achieve meta-stability.

James Cutter came awake very slowly. His eyes refused to come open as

he lay on the cold deck of his ship. He could hear the other crew members complaining about the same problem, along with others. He could hear them complaining about not being able to move their limbs or having trouble thinking. "Captain Cutter, are you able to move?" Serina's voice came over the speakers. "Yes, though I can't see anything right now," he complained as he rolled over on his stomach to stand. His limbs were incredibly weak as he leaned against the cryo-pod. "I'm not surprised captain, You've all been asleep for over 300 years," her calm voice came over the speaker. His eyes snapped open as he heard that. "W-w-w-what?" He could hear the exclamations of his crew from down the line of cryonic pods. "What the hell do you mean we've been asleep for over 300 years!" He exclaimed.

It took about 2 hours for all of Cutter's questions to be answered. He learned what happened during the 300+ years. All the damage that his ship had taken during the trip, 3 additional rail guns inoperable, massive armor damage and the many corpses that needed to be cleared from the lower decks were only the beginning. His ship would need massive repairs that he was lucky enough to have most of the parts needed. He learned that they were in a new galaxy altogether and the chance of making a return trip was almost non-existent. They were currently in a system that had 1 planet in the life zone, but the atmosphere was toxic to humans. It had nothing useful for food or water stuffs, but was a gold mine for metals and things necessary to bring the sub-light engines and the reactors to full power. It would take over a month for the reactors and armor to be brought to full effectiveness, and 3 months to restore the engines to full power, so they had no choice but to set out a comm-buoy as their resources wouldn't last that long with the full crew. As the end of the first month came to a close, they had a surprise. A ship came out of FTL at the outer most edge of the system, outside of the effective range of the defensive fighter screen.

April 21, 2183 Citadel time line

Cmdr John Shepard Stared at the Citadel Council, As they instated him in as the first human Spectre. "You have your mission Cmdr, get to it," the asari councilor Tevos dismissed, with Sparatus the turian and Valern the salarian councilors leaving the stage. John, with his teammates Tali'Zorah nar Rayya and Garrus Vakarian a quarian and turian respectively, turned and made their way down the walkway toward the human councilor and Captain Anderson. They quickly learned all they could from the 2 humans, before the 2 went on their ways. Shepard overheard an admiral arguing with someone on a comm, and learned the mans problem. John walked away with a request from Admiral Kohaku to search for his missing marines. John and his team made their way toward the dock after accomplishing the things he needed to on the Citadel, where he met up with Udina and Anderson again. He was given command of the SSV Normandy and they left the Citadel.

After gaining a mission from Urdnot Wrex, the krogan mercenary, they dealt with the scumbag who had Wrex's family armor. "This is it, I can't believe my ancestors ever wore this piece of crap," Wrex lifted the old armor up as he examined it, "but at least I've got it back." "I'm glad we could help you get it back," John told him Garrus nodded in the background. Shepard had helped him deal with his past demons as well. "I might just be starting to like you Shepard." With that he started out of the base owned by the now deceased turian Tonn Actus. John looked over at Garrus, the turian shrugged, "I don't understand

him any better than you do Shepard." He said with a smile on his face. Shepard smiled as he nodded, "Well, lets get back to the Normandy."

As they docked the shuttle in the Normandy's hanger, Joker came over the speaker, "Shepard, Admiral Hackett is on the comm for you. I'll patch him through when your ready." "Alright Joker, give me a few minutes to get to the comm," was his response as Shepard moved to the galaxy map. "Put him through Joker." The admiral's deep voice came out of the comm, "Cmdr, we've just discovered what we think is a distress signal as it keeps repeating, but it's not compatible with our comm systems. I know your in the Argos Rho cluster, but your the only ship that can get to the signal in the Artemis Tau cluster in any reasonable amount of time. The signal originates in a system just outside of that cluster, but still in range of your fuel reserves. We picked up the signal with some old tech that works sporadic at best, so the signal could have been playing a lot longer than that, we're asking you to put the pedal to the metal Cmdr. If we had anyone else in the area, we'd have them do it, but your all we have Shepard." Shepard thought about it for a moment, "Are we sure it's not a geth trick?" "The signal doesn't match anything your quarian gave us on geth tech Shepard." Shepard thought about the mission, "Alright admiral, I'll check it out. Shepard out." With that the comm ended. "Joker, Set course for the Artemis Tau cluster." "Roger that Cmdr. Trip should take about 7 days." Outside the ship, the Normandy jumped to FTL heading for the mass relay.

3 Days in to the trip, they started to pick up the signal. Still incompatible with mass effect comm systems though. But the pattern did repeat every 30 minutes. The idea that it was a distress signal became more and more of a possibility. The crew debated for many hours on what left the distress signal. Was it a ship of an undiscovered species? Maybe it was a group of surviving protheans. Maybe it was a just a garbled signal. The ideas kept getting wilder than the one before it. When asked, Wrex just wanted it to be someone to fight, Tali wanted someone to talk engineering, Garrus refused to speculate, Kaiden Alenko and Ashley Williams wanted a lost colony ship, the new crew member Liara T'Soni wanted it to be a surviving prothean group. And Shepard just said he wasn't going to make even a guess at who the people were.

The end of the trip came very quickly. 4 days seemed to pass in the blink of an eye, and they came out of FTL in a flash of light. "Cmdr, I've got fighters flying out there," Joker's voice snapped over the comm, "Keep out of effective weapons range Joker! I'm on my way," Shepard sprinted down the hall as he headed for the bridge. He came up behind Joker, catching his breath in the seconds it took. "Cmdr, your going to want to see this," Joker spoke before Shepard could ask anything. Joker brought up a few images of the fighters on the holographic screen. The image on screen showed a surprisingly human looking fighter. The designs of it matching what would be designed by human hands if they'd taken an old air superiority fighter and made it space worthy. The gun and missile emplacements easy to distinguish. "Cmdr, we're receiving a hail, but I'm not sure from where or on what type of carrier the signal is," by this point the other members of Shepard's team had come on to the bridge, and Garrus noticed something they didn't, "What's that coming from around the planet?" He pointed to the display. Joker zoomed in on the object, "It looks like a ship, but it has to be massive. I'll take a reading." It only took seconds for the data to scroll across the

screen, and it shut everyone up for a second. The size of the ship came up before a more detailed image of it did, Ashley was the one to comment, "Holy Shit! That thing's bigger than any known dreadnaught in the galaxy!" The size displayed an astounding 2.5 km long, and that was only the length. A ding got Joker's attention, "Uh Cmdr, the hail has changed carrier wave. It's now on a radio wave." Everybody was a little surprised by that. Radio wasn't used for much these days. "Then put it on Joker."

Spirit of Fire Bridge

When the ship dropped out of FTL, there was no warning. It wasn't there one minute, then it was. The ship looked nothing like any known species ship class. For one thing, no known species used that small of corvette class anymore. The UNSC had once had a military corvette class, but it was decommissioned when it was discovered that it stood no chance against anything but covenant fighter classes. The cap fighters started to arm all weapons as they scrambled for defensive positions. Capt Cutter snapped to the weapons officer, "Arm all online rail guns, missiles and charge the MAC!" The weapons officer did as he was told, the missile pods coming online instantly along with half the remaining rail guns and the charge for the MAC starting, "Sir, power fluctuations through the rail guns! At best we have half the guns, at worst they might fail all together!" "Damn, lets just hope their peaceful. Serina, what can you tell me?" The AI snapped her attention to the Capt, "They speak English," her calm response stopped everyone cold. "They speak English?" His disbelieving voice asked, "Yes Capt," she said this as she brought up an image of the vessel, along the side of the ship in bold letters read SR-1 Normandy. Everyone on the bridge was stunned silent. Cutter was the first to recover, "Lt Alvaro," his comms officer looked at him, "hail that ship." The Lt nodded and did as told. The signal sent, but the other vessel did nothing but sit in space. "Capt," Serina spoke, "maybe they use a different form of communication." Her suggestion was much more than reasonable. They were in a galaxy different then their own, so the thought that they would use Slip-Space comms was laughable. But the fact that they used English gave Cutter an idea. "Alvaro, try the old radio channels." The Lt nodded and followed the order.

Normandy Bridge

Joker nodded to the order, and followed through. "SR-1 Normandy, this is the UNSC Spirit of Fire. What is your species, how do you know the English language? I've got questions and you have the answers I need." Shepard didn't know what to do for a moment, but he knew he needed to respond pretty quickly, "Uh, this is the Normandy, who am I speaking to? I've never heard of the UNSC before. I speak English because it's the language of my home world." He was cut off, "That's not possible! English is the language of UEG, the UNSC and all her colonies! I know we are in a galaxy that's close to the Milky Way galaxy, but we're not in Milky Way!" Shepard was confused, but he cut the other captain off as he was getting annoyed, "A, we are in the Milky Way, B I don't know who the UEG are and C, I'm a council Spectre! So I'm not answering any questions until you tell me who you people are!" Shepard waited for a response from the other captain as his crew looked a little concerned about the massive vessel. "The UEG stands for United Earth Government, and we came from the Milky Way, so what you say is impossible." The alien members of the crew were staring at Shepard, waiting to see what he'd do. "There is no such

thing as the UEG, Earth and her colonies are under the auspices of the Systems Alliance. Who the hell are you people?" He shouted in to the radio.

Spirit of Fire bridge

Everyone of the bridge crew was staring at the captain, waiting for his orders. "Serina, have you made any progress in a visual link?" The AI nodded, "Yes captain, all you need to do is cut the radio transmission." "Normandy, I'm cutting off transmission. I'll hail back in exactly 5 minutes." "Acknowledged." The Normandy's commander responded. "Alright people, I want my weapons online. Ops, what's the MAC charge?" The officer was quick on the take, "80% sir!" "Any more power issues with the rail guns?" The officer shook his head, "No sir. Power holding at 10 deck guns." Cutter nodded. "Serina, what can you tell me about that ship?" The AI looked at the captain, "It has almost no armor, the ship uses a method of FTL I don't know the science to, unknown form of power, unknown armaments and it is incredibly small for a warship. I can tell you it's armed, just not with what. I'm ready to hack their computers on your order though," she left the statement hanging for the order. "Not yet, we'll see how the conversation goes, then decide whether to hack them." She nodded, "Time Captain." He nodded, "Alvaro, send the hail."

2. Cerberus and a base

****Forgot to do this on the first chapter, but I obviously don't own either Mass Effect or Halo Wars. They belong to BioWare and Ensemble Studios respectively. I didn't bring it up in the last chapter but Shepard is paragon, war hero and Earth born. I'd like to thank Jackofalltrades32456 for his review and criticisms on my descriptions and conversation points.****

As the screen came on, two separate crews stared in shock. The crew of the Normandy could tell from the exterior of the ship that it had an alien design, but seeing humans on a ship that different was something they weren't prepared for. The crew of the Spirit of Fire was better able to recover from the shock, having been through some crazy situations.

"Serina can you explain?" Cutter's voice cut through the silence.

On the Normandy bridge, a female voice came over the comm. "It would seem sir, that there exist the possibility that either there is a second branch of humanity that evolved on a second Earth, or the forerunners planted humanity in a second galaxy entirely."

"What the hell are you people talking about?" Shepard's voice cut off any reply Cutter may have made to the Spirit of Fire's AI.

Cutter glanced over to the side, presumably at this Serina. "I don't know who forerunner are and I don't know what your talking about when you say a second Earth! What is going on?!" Shepard's frustration showed through his voice as he grabbed his head.

"I have a question first captain of the Normandy, is that a human warship?" the UNSC's captain asked.

"Yes it is, why?" Shepard gave his confused response.

"Then why are there aliens on your bridge?" Cutter's voice was hard as he brought this fact up. James Cutter, having captained the Spirit for almost during the war against the Covenant, was a man that had a slight xenophobic hatred. Seeing innocent civilians burned to glass from plasma weaponry will do that to even the most open minded people.

"These aliens are a part of my crew!" Shepard could hear the underlined hatred in the man's voice. Having grown to maturity after the First Contact war with the turians, he'd known the reality that aliens existed almost all his life. He had no alien prejudice, not against the quarians who most of the galaxy saw as vagrants or thieves, or the turians who had attacked the human race. Having spoken to both Tali and Wrex, he saw past the preconceived notions against their species, and Garrus was becoming his go to for ground teams. So when someone spoke with hatred against his crew, he got irritable.

"I don't think I like your tone captain." Shepard could cause someone to shiver when he wanted to, but it had no effect on a captain who had spent almost seven years fighting the Covenant.

"Is there a reason I should care?" Cutter's voice was as cold as Shepard's. He was not about to be intimidated by a ship the size of a corvette.

"Captain," Serina's voice cut in to the tension, "perhaps it would be better to get off the subject of aliens. All it will lead to at this point, is a battle that has no point."

Cutter sighed, "Your right Serina." He turned back to the screen, "I'm captain James Cutter of the UNSC Spirit of Fire. Who exactly are you?"

Shepard was a little stunned from the quick turn around. "I'm commander John Shepard of the Human System Alliance. I'm also a citadel Spectre."

The other captain nodded. "Alright commander, hears the deal. My ship lacks it's means of FTL. We're basically dead in the water, and have no way to travel anywhere within the next 60 years. If there is any way something could be facilitated to get the materials, we have the means to construct a replacement drive. We just lack an important metal to create a portal. I'll have Serina send a list of materials we need. If we can get them, we can be on our way."

The Normandy's pilot spoke up at that point, "Commander, we just got a data pack from them." Shepard nodded, "Bring it up Joker."

Over the course of two months, the Spirit of Fire was able to get the elements needed to get a new slip-space drive built. However, as Serina was able to study forerunner ships during their adventure on the shield world, she was able to improve the slip-space drive a bit. The drive was now able to get closer to the speeds of a Covenant equivalent. The Covenant could travel nine-hundred light years a day, the Spirit of Fire could travel six-hundred light years a day. This would be an incredible advantage to have for a warship of the Spirit of Fire's size.

During this time, the Normandy was exchanging information with the crew of the Spirit of Fire. Most of the data was just harmless history sharing, but Shepard tried to ask a few questions that got a little to close to tactical data for Cutter's liking. He had basically enacted a small version of the Cole protocol by locking down all tactical and navigational data. He also kept the Spartans under wraps. He didn't need these alien councilors on his ass, with an AI, nuclear weapons and a method of travel and weaponry completely separate from the mass relays. He spoke very briefly about the Human-Covenant War, just to say it was a conflict for the right to exist, and learned about the First Contact war in return. Cutter had to cover the laugh that wanted to escape when he heard the way they spoke about the war. Under a year, with minimal casualties. As opposed to multiple planets glassed and billions dead. Now that's a war.

With the completion of the new slip-space drive, they no longer needed the Normandy. With his mission report submitted, Shepard moved down the walk from the bridge toward the galaxy map. He'd done more than his civic duty to the people on the other ship. Giving them the assistance needed to fix their ship and acting as a supply ship, his crew was restless to continue their job over taking out Saren Arterius the rogue Spectre. But he needed to make sure his team stayed on target, so needed to handle the things they held on to. He'd helped Wrex, now time to help Garrus deal with his past. "Joker, Take us to the Kepler Verge."

"You got it Shepard." The Normandy's pilot responded quickly. With their destination in mind, the Normandy jumped to FTL, heading back toward the mass relay.

The Bridge crew of the Spirit of Fire watched as the ship vanished. Cutter sighed as he took off his hat and scratched his head. "Lieutenant Alvaro, bring our fighters back in and tell the ship to prepare for slip-space." The communications officer nodded as he turned toward his station. The sensor officer turned toward his station, as the crew went about following their orders, and caught a ping.

This was followed by six more, then twenty. "CAPTAIN!" Everybody turned toward the young ensign, "We've got twenty new ships out there!"

Cutter stared at him for a moment, "Operations, charge all weapons! I want tonnage and weapons check!" The commander started his job, when Serina spoke up, "Captain, their hailing."

Cutter nodded, "Put it through Serina." The AI nodded and a human face came up on the screen.

"This is the SSV Voyage Lost, we represent a human group known as Cerberus. We have an offer from our boss." That got Cutter's attention. The data he got from Shepard had Cerberus in it. They were terrorists and monsters.

"Serina, cut audio please." She complied while looking at him. "I want you to hack their systems. I want every piece of data from those computers!" She nodded, "And put audio back on."

"I have orders to deliver the message," he nodded to someone off to

the side.

A man with cybernetic eyes came on over the screen, "Captain Cutter of the UNSC, I am the Illusive Man. I operate the group known as Cerberus. I want your ship to join our group. I know that Shepard has had a few bad experiences with my organization and that we have a bad reputation, but our reputation is entirely unearned. We stand for human dominance over the rest of the races, and believe you can help us further our cause. I'm aware of the violent history of your group, and like our humanity, you've fought every step of the way. I want a favorable response, and expect an answer soon."

The Illusive Man's image vanished, to be replaced with the helmeted human on the Voyage Lost. "We will wait here while you decide your answer." The communication cut after that.

Voyage Lost bridge

The Cerberus captain smiled. He knew that either the Spirit of Fire joined, or they were going to be blown out of the sky. His sensor officer snapped his attention away from the view. "Sir! They have a massive amount of energy going somewhere, but I can't lock down where!"

The other bridge crew glanced at each other nervously. "Comms, Get the UNSC ship back up!" The officer nodded and on the screen Captain Cutter came up. "What in the hell are you playing at captain!"

The UNSC officer feigned ignorance, "I have no idea what your talking about Cerberus." "Where is all that energy going!?" His voice sounded nervous even to himself.

The UNSC captain smirked, "Why, that energy is to power my ship's weapons." And the connection cut. The Cerberus agent looked shocked as he stared out at the UNSC ship. A brilliant flash of light, and he saw nothing ever again.

Spirit of Fire bridge

During the Illusive Man's offer, Serina had hacked the Cerberus network and was sifting through the data. The first thing she found was the join or die clause attached to the Illusive Man's offer. Her eyes narrowed as she dug further in to the network. She found things that Cerberus sanctioned, that would have had Catherine Halsey calling for war crimes after the Spartan II program. As she began to look even further, digging in to the agent names, when the access slammed shut. That meant someone noticed her in the system and cut the ships from the network.

She came out of the hack as the Cerberus agents started their hails. "What have you got Serina?" She turned to her captain, "They are the worse than the Covenant. The Covenant just kills humans, they don't experiment on them with no goal in sight. Blast them captain." Her recommendation given, she waited to see what he would do.

"Ops, wait for my signal, then fire. Put Cerberus back on comms." The lieutenant nodded and the Cerberus agent appeared back on the screen.

"What the hell are you playing at captain!?" The furious voice of the

Cerberus operative demanded.

Cutter made his face as innocent as he could be before responding, "I have no idea what your talking about Cerberus."

"Where is all that energy going!?" The Cerberus captain's voice was incredibly nervous.

Cutter smirked at the terrorists on the other ship, "Why, that energy is to power my ship's weapons." The communications officer cut the connection as the MAC cannon fired a round.

The MAC round, a 600 ton object traveling at 30 kilometers a second, hit the front of the unshielded Cerberus ship. The nose of the ship crumpled in toward the mass effect core as the MAC round blow out the back of the ship. The core collapsed inward as a massive explosion blew out, ripping the ship apart.

The other Cerberus ships had no reaction for a moment, forcing three more ships to follow the fate of the first before their kinetic barriers came online. As the Spirit of Fire's MAC recharged, her rail guns opened up on one ship as her archer missiles launched at another ship. The missile targeted ship's GAURDIAN laser array started taking out missiles left and right, however the massive number of missiles started scoring hits on the barrier. With the directed warheads on the archers, the kinetic barrier quickly fell, the missiles ripped massive rents in the hull till a lucky missile hit a major power conduit causing the ship to blow.

The ship targeted by the Spirit's multiple rail guns blew the kinetic barrier apart, digging in to the ship till it exploded in a spectacular fashion. The rest of the Cerberus ship group was not idle during the destruction of six of their ships in the first 30 minutes of combat. Their mass effect cannons were firing away with what would normally be blistering force, but was having incredibly little effect against the armor designed to resist Covenant plasma weapons. The Honeycombed Titanium A armor had almost a hundred holes all over the front of the ship, but no hull breaches anywhere along the superstructure.

The rail guns and missiles had switched to new targets during the enemy barrage, as the MAC reached a charge of sixty percent. During the barrage against the new targets, the rest of the Cerberus ships brought out the disruptor torpedoes. Launching a full spread, they were hoping for multiple hits. However, as the torpedoes started to close in on the Spirit of Fire, the 50mm CIWS guns controlled by Serina started knocking them out of the sky.

The very design of the torpedoes themselves were working in the UNSC's favor. The unstable mass effect fields that were generated by the detonation of them caused the destruction of the torpedoes around them. Within minutes, all the torpedoes had been destroyed. During this exchange, three more ships had been destroyed. The MAC cannon had reached full power by this point and the thrusters maneuvered the ship on to a new attack vector. With the bow of the Spirit of Fire facing a new enemy ship, the MAC let loose with a thunderous report. In minutes, another four ships were out of the fight. In under an hour, 13 of the original 20 ships sent to confront the UNSC ship were destroyed. The last 7, seeing how little damage was caused to the much larger ship, turned and tried to flee. The Spirit of Fire's deck

guns were able to destroy one more and disable another before they left the system. The disabled ship, seeing no chance but capture, self destructed. The core exploded taking out the rest of the ship.

With the Cerberus ships gone, Cutter turned toward his weapons officer. "Cool the power on all weapons down. I want an inventory on how many archers we have left." He turned toward another member of the bridge crew, "Engineering, what's our structural integrity?"

The engineering officer brought the numbers up in his station, "They're not good sir. We have micro fractures along the entire superstructure of the ship. If there had been 5 more ships, we would have been destroyed." His statement was given with complete seriousness, stunning the rest of the bridge. They hadn't thought the enemy weapons had been that effective as with each impact they had only felt tiny shudders. "Our armor has suffered massive damage as well sir."

Cutter had to slow his breathing and his heart rate, or he'd pass out. "D-do we know of anywhere we can make repairs?"

Serina took this chance to intrude on everyone's shock, "Captain, according to the star charts we've received from the Normandy, the Procyon system and Arcadia still exists but have not been colonized or claimed by any species."

Cutter scratched his head in thought. "Are we sure it hasn't been claimed?" The AI nodded in response. "Engineering, will my ship hold together during the trip?"

The ensign studied his console, checking the numbers against the minimal safety numbers. "Yes sir. The numbers fall in to the safe zone. Any more of those shots, and we'd never survive a slip-space jump."

"Helm, plot a course for the Procyon system," Cutter looked out of the massive view screens, "take us to slip-space!" With the order given, a black portal, blue around the edges, appeared in space. The Spirit of Fire moved toward it, slipping in to the event horizon of the portal. When the ship had fully immersed itself in to the portal, the portal vanished. In the silence following the vanishing of the UNSC ship, debris in the remains of the Cerberus ships came alive. Stealth probes activated remotely during the battle had recorded data concerning the battle. The Cerberus logo painted proudly on the device themselves stood for a moment before transmitting their data to an outside source. After completing their purpose, the small bomb inside the device blew, wiping the device from existence.

3 Weeks later, a slip-space portal opened in an unclaimed system. The Spirit of Fire exited the slip-space tear in a quite fashion. Cutter turned to his engineering officer, "How's the ship holding up Ensign Ricky?"

The ensign turned toward his captain, "Everything is green captain." Cutter nodded. "Serina, is everything where it's supposed to be?"

The AI was quick with her response, "Yes captain. The planet is in the life zone, it has very high concentrations of the metals

necessary to effect the repairs on the superstructure and the armor. However, we are looking at an effort that will take at least 3 years to complete with the tools and man power we have at hand. With no space dock, we will have to rip much of the outer hull and decking apart to access the fractures in the superstructure. The armor will be the easiest area to repair and should not take much more than a few months to form the replacement panels."

Cutter nodded in resignation. "Well, let's setup a few fire bases while we have the ship at full functionality."

The operations officer nodded as he issued the order from the captain. "Albatross drop ships, this is an order from the captain, begin fire base deployments. The fire bases should be near the highest iron and other ore veins," the officer looked at his captain, Cutter held up 3 fingers, "deployment begins in 3 hours. That is all."

Serina looked at her captain, "Perhaps we should keep an eye on this new galaxy while we effect repairs. We can acquire useful peaces of technology, maybe even a small ship to study these mass effect fields and their uses in combat and defense. While our armor held off the enemy, having a shield of a sorts might be the deciding factor in a future battle."

Cutter rubbed his chin in thought. "You're right. Ops, get 4 separate mixed teams of marines and scientists together for recon duty."

Ops Sergeant Ford nodded and did as he was told.

Vehicle bay of the Spirit of Fire

2 separate groups of people waited in the vehicle bay. The 2 groups were easy to recognize. The scientists had their lab coats on, while the marines had their equipment on. They were talking among themselves as they waited for captain Cutter to give them their orders.

Cutter made his appearance, the marines snapped to attention in a salute, while the scientists all turned to face him standing just a little straighter. "At ease soldiers.

"As you know, while we spent the last 300 years asleep, we drifted in to a new galaxy. Now we know that there is a whole new group of aliens out there, but they are the one in charge of the galaxy. We know that there is a new Earth that has very closely followed the same history as ours and has evolved the same way. You will be broken up in to four teams, a mix of scientists with a much larger marine force to protect them. Your squad leaders with divvy up the assignments and postings.

"Team one, now know as Team Heavy, will be sent to this Citadel to learn how this new galaxy works. They will be learning about the different races and seeing if they can't get a hold of the private technology, like personal armor and weapons. It's imperative that we know as much as we can to ensure our survival and that we thrive in this new environment.

"Team two, known as Team Swift, is to try and get access to the ship grade tech. I want to understand how the ship level combat and

movement work. They have a type of shield that's standard on all ships here, I want it. We need an edge if these Cerberus terrorists make a reappearance. Our armor is a huge benefit that they lack, but if we want a chance of staying on top, we need these barriers. I also want you to look in to these torpedoes. We might not be able to stop them next time.

"Team three, now Team Knowledge, we need informants out there. We need to know about the threats we'll have to take out. I want you to infiltrate the various mercenary gangs out there. They have access to the underbelly of the galaxy, and I want to know what they know. Collect some money, and buy interesting information from this Shadow Broker. I understand he's the very best in information brokers.

"And team four, now Team Zero, is the team that I need to find a source for this element zero. I want a source that nobody else knows about it. If we're going to be a part of this galaxy, we need to have a reliable source of the thing that spins this galaxy. They use element zero for pretty much everything conceivable. I'm going to have Anders trying to come up with a way around element zero, but I know it's going to take a while."

Cutter turned toward the elevator, "You have your missions, take an albatross. Each check in is exactly one month. I expect detailed information from each team. Dismissed!"

The marines threw a quick salute, then turned to their team leaders. Cutter entered the elevator, heading for the bridge.

**For those worried I was planning on make the Spirit of Fire basically a Nerf gun versus actual guns, I think I've alleviated that fear. Now I've always maintained that the technology developed by the UNSC was better than that used by the mass effect universe. Think about it, in Halo, humanity created a way to travel faster than light completely independently of anything beyond their own ingenuity. However, in mass effect, after humanity discovered mass effect technology their ingenuity died. They made only one advancement in tech that no other race had created, being medigel(even though it goes against Citadel law). I've not heard of a single other major advancement in all three games. I'm sure that their were other minor ones, but nothing that really changed the landscape. **

3. Omega

**To address some of my reviewers, I did more research on the Mass Effect universe. My reviewer brought up the thermal clips for ME 2 and 3 along with the Thanix cannon from ME 2. The geth created the thermal clips though they were adapted by all organics and the turians created the Thanix cannon. It was a secret project they started after the attack by Saren and Sovereign. Also to the person who brought up the distance between the Milky Way to Andromeda galaxies, I don't believe that it really matters. If you took a ship outside of FTL from one to the other, it probably wouldn't even make it halfway before every system on board started to fail. Eventually lack of maintenance would probably cause the power systems to go and kill everybody on board. And I set this up so that Shepard is paragon. I'm a believer that good people help on just the principle that they are good people. If I saw a man who needed serious help, I like to think that I would help this person to the best of my

abilities. And besides a little bit of time and acting as a transport, it's not like it cost them much to help a group of unknowns. And we're moving on...**

**Don't own ME or Halo and all that jazz. Wish I did, but can't have all our wishes can we :). **

Spirit of Fire 4 years later.

After the massive success of the four recon teams, the UNSC group was able to do a massive overhaul. The recon teams success enabled them to be able to add things to the Spirit like kinetic barriers and multiple thanix cannons. The latter only came about after the massive dreadnaught Sovereign was destroyed at the Citadel. The original design of the Spirit included 4 massive machine storage bays, but they had to drop all the vehicles out of the fourth bay to make room for the new mass effect cores. A happy discovery though, was that they could actually power the new cannons and the kinetic barriers completely separate from the original power plants. An unfortunate discovery of kinetic barriers, was that they were not able to function without a mass effect core. This limited what the UNSC engineers were able to accomplish. Something they discovered about mass effect FTL, was that it required venting the built up static charge in an atmosphere. They'd never been so happy to have slip-space.

Team Knowledge was the first group to send an update. They had successfully slipped in to the separate mercenary groups and had set up numerous monetary accountants for the other groups to draw from. With the amount of money coming in from the different jobs that were available to mercenaries, the other teams were able to blow through their goals.

Team Swift were able to purchase four separate supply freighters. They also purchased three disconnected drive cores, multiple kinetic barriers, multiple Thanix cannons and several tons of element zero or 'eezo'.

Team Heavy was able to purchase enough armor to outfit the entire marine contingent. The armor needed massive modifications though. The weapons sent back were researched, but ultimately dismantled. They served a purpose though. The components were used to modify the existing UNSC weapons. The team also sent back enough omni-tools to outfit the entire UNSC population.

Team Zero found numerous sources of eezo, but they were in use by other species. Most of them were in use by the turians, but a surprising number of the eezo sources were actually in use by the batarians. They had to avoid all known mass relays to accomplish their mission. One of the team had actually decided to investigate the location his colony would have been in their home galaxy. Turned out the planet the colony would be terraformed from actually existed and a gas giant with abundant eezo resources. After a little digging, it was discovered that the batarian groups were all being founded by the Hegemony. The most numerous batarian groups were actually so called 'pirate' groups. This information was verified, before being sent to both the Citadel Council and the Alliance. With this job completed, they returned to their original job.

Team Knowledge closely monitored the actions of both groups. The

Alliance advanced their warship production to it's highest maximum output, without breaking the Treaty of Farixen. The Council on the other hand, did nothing public. Their excuse was that they weren't part of the citadel species, so were not able to do anything public.

Cutter decided to keep Team Knowledge out in the field. They would be a very valuable source of information. With the team embedded in several mercenary units, they could keep watch over multiple important information sources.

With the cargo freighters, the UNSC was able to completely overhaul them. They started with the superstructure of the ships. They changed the entire structure from a civilian freighter to a new frigate design. They followed the UNSC standard destroyer design, though scaled down. They lacked the means to crew and metals to create standard UNSC frigates, so used the Alliance standard. The difference of course, was the armor, weapons and barrier designs.

The new frigates, classed as the 'Katana' class, were equipped with two modified MAC cannons. With the size of the ships, only about seven-hundred and fifty meters in total, they lacked the space to put a full sized MAC, let alone the ammo of one. So they were forced to scale the MAC down. They were also forced to use an alternate source for ammo. The depleted uranium of a standard MAC round was too volatile to use on such a small cannon. With standard MAC cannons out of the question, they decided to use both mass effect tech and UNSC to create a hybrid system. The rounds, about the size of a car, were accelerated to MAC velocity and their mass was reduced to a fraction of their original mass. The result was spectacular. They had the same damage potential as a standard MAC for being less than an eighth of the original size. The scientists, being lead by Dr. Anders, quickly adapted the working theory of MAC reduction to ground and vehicle weapons. With Serina's assistance, they maximized the power output of a drive core while reducing the eezo cost. The addition of Thanix cannons and Titanium A armor, the new 'Katana' class was more than a force to be reckoned with. In a stand up battle, frigate to frigate, it was estimated that the 'Katana' class could take more than five enemy frigate.

Over the 4 years that the Spirit was undergoing refit and repair, 14 heavy bases had been established and were operating. With no reasonable chance to return home and the human race potentially extinct in their original galaxy, they decided to establish Arcadia as the new home world of the UNSC. With only a limited amount of personnel, numerous births occurred. Out of the 11,000 original crew, only 9150 reached the new galaxy, and the number of births brought the total population up to 9220.

Cutter made the decision to increase the amount of UNSC personnel, quietly after the Spirit was repaired. They would need to find reliable human people to quietly bring in to the fold. They would have to be among the disillusioned, or they could be convinced to spy on their new neighbors and allies. The effects of the war with the Covenant were still being felt by the people of the UNSC, so they felt that the council would be best avoided at the present time. The council was aware of their existence, but when the council had sent ships to investigate the original system they had been located in, only hidden spy drones and empty space awaited them. The Systems Alliance had also sent investigative ships, but they found the same

thing. Cutter believed that remaining hidden was best at the moment, as their technology and ship could potentially change the balance of power for any species if they were to get their hands on it.

The four 'Katana' class ships, named the UNSC Spirit Within, the UNSC Launch of Fire, the UNSC John Forge and the UNSC Spartan Within, were designated as the defense force for the entire colony. The UNSC just doesn't have the personnel to have more than a small force in orbit or on the ground. With the children being born, that took even more people out of the military.

With the absolute minimum crew required to operate the Spirit of Fire, Cutter decided to make the UNSC presence felt at Omega first. With the four frigates standing as an honor guard, the Spirit of Fire angled toward the greater cosmos and opened a slip-space portal, exiting the system.

Three months after Shepard destroyed a batarian colony. This act, brought a lot of doubt straight on to the Commanders head. He was removed from rank and confined to Earth pending a formal investigation. Now while this was a huge thing to the Systems Alliance and the Batarian Hegemony, it had little to no impact on the rest of the universe. Omega especially took very little notice. To Aria T'Loak, it was a minor footnote and she took no further interest. His insistence on the existence of the reapers was of more interest. For him to destroy an entire star system, to her anyway, helped prove his case. Someone who had snapped, would go to some far places to prove themselves correct, but would never blow up a mass relay to do it. She decided preparedness was the key to avoiding destruction. She hired multiple mercenary units and their corresponding ships to act as a defense force.

With a mercenary defense force, she figured they would do their best to earn their money. So it left her more than a little bit disconcerted when the proximity alarms started going off and reports of a massive ship just appearing out of a spacial anomaly.

"What's going on people!" Aria demanded of the crew in her operations center.

"We have no idea ma'am!" Came over her comm link. The batarian's hands flew over the controls at the sensor station. "The anomaly showed up in a burst of unknown radiation, then the ship just flew straight out of it!"

She stared out the window, the massive ship floating in the void between Omega and her defense force. The ships were calling in for her orders, but the ship was doing nothing threatening at the moment.

"Defense force, keep weapons lock and barriers up! If that ship has any energy surges, blast it to space dust!" The acknowledgments came quick.

The time it took for her to issue her orders to the mercenaries, her batarian man at the sensors made a startling discovery. "Aria! They're humans!"

"Repeat that!" Her voice was hard.

"I repeat, they're humans!"

"How can you tell?"

"The ship has English printed on the side of it. It states 'UNSC Spirit of Fire', and it has some sort of bird of prey over a globe."

She looked at the ship, and noticed something. Along the lower portion, a bay opened up. As soon as it opened up fully, a small transport ship left the larger vessel heading toward Omega herself.

"I want all troops at the docking bay! Nobody fires a shot till I order it or your fired upon!" She turned and ran her way down to the docking bay. She got there just as the last of her men got in to position. She had her own pistol out and waited for the human group to round the corner. The heavy thudding sounds announced the 'UNSC' group long before they came around the corner. When they did, it was hard for most of the mercenaries not to shoot.

Three massive, and heavy if the thudding coming from their feet was any indication, came around the corner taking up a pyramid position with assault rifles facing the ground. She noticed something odd about the rifles though. They were more bulky then most of the rifles carried by the mercenaries that she'd hired. The giants did nothing visible but hold position. After a few minutes, another group came around the corner. The man in the front of the group wore a dress uniform. He must have been of high rank, as he wore many medals on his chest.

When the mystery man stopped, one of her mercenaries dropped his rifle to his side and snapped to attention with a salute. "Captain on the deck!" A full three quarters of the humans on her payroll followed the same action. The entire group of true mercenaries could do nothing but stare at the hidden agents. She had her suspicions, the weapons and armor were to different. The unknown man snapped a salute to the men, "Fall in marines!"

The fake mercenaries snapped off their salutes and fell in behind the unknown party. The unknown man made his way toward her.

"Aria T'Loak?" She nodded to the unknown.

"You have me at a disadvantage. I've never heard off your group, and you have me out numbered."

"My name is James Cutter. I'm the captain of the ship out there, the UNSC Spirit of Fire. I'm aware that humans are well known in the universe, but we aren't a part of that group."

Her non existent eyebrow raised at that. "If your not a part of the 'Human' Systems Alliance, then who are you?"

"We are part of the United Nations Space Command, or the UNSC. We are actually from outside this very galaxy." He said it in such a matter of fact voice, that she had a hard time disbelieving what he said. But the idea that humans existed outside the galaxy was absolutely absurd.

"You know how ridiculous that sounds?"

"I have sensor data that proves my statement, along with Shepard's statements about the reapers."

His statement stopped her cold. "H-how did you come by this sensor data?"

He looked her right in the eye, "We passed by them while traveling to this galaxy."

Her eyes widened. "If that's the case, then why is your group still alive?" Her question raised a very good point in even the captain's mind.

"I think the reason they left us alone, is because we were running on such a low amount of power that we might have been invisible to their sensors. Our sensors were running on passive mode. They registered massive metal constructs, but nothing else about the objects." His answer was well thought out. The smartest of the UNSC scientists aboard the Spirit of Fire had puzzled that very question, and that was the best answer they could come up with.

She thought about that for a few moments. "Follow me." She turned and led the captain and the three behemoths away from the docking station, and toward her usual office of Afterlife.

"So if your extragalactic humans, why are you here? Are your people coming to take the galaxy for themselves?" She decided to begin the q&a session at the most important part for her.

"No. In fact, we were heading toward our home after a battle with a genocidal group of alien races called the Covenant. We got lost and after many years ended up here."

She thought about his answer for a few moments before responding. "If that's true, why don't you just go home?"

We can't. We don't know which direction our home galaxy is in and even if we did, it was a fluke we ended up here instead of dead." His answer was very matter of fact. They knew they had no chance to return home, and to try was suicide.

She nodded. "I assume you've set up a base on another planet then." Her statement wasn't a question. It was a statement of fact. If they'd really traveled the distance between galaxies, their ship would have needed serious repairs.

"That's correct. We have already established a planet and have adapted your mass effect technology to our ship." Even letting that little tid-bit out didn't tell her anything about the capabilities of his ship. All it did was tell her they knew the tech level of all the local species.

"So what are you here for?" If they were as equipped as he indicated, they had to have a reason for their arrival here.

"Actually, we cam-" he was cut off as several shots were fired at Aria. The shots hit her barriers, before she could throw up a biotic field, she was tackled to the ground and in to cover by one of the

massive behemoths. The shots flew over the twos cover, taking out some of her men.

The behemoth, male according to his voice asked a simple question. "Are you OK?"

The shots kept her men pinned down around the corner as she nodded. "I'm fine! Just pissed that who ever they are thought they could get the jump on me." He nodded, before snapping his head up then back down. "7 hostiles. Human. Armed with assault rifles and SMGs." The other two behemoths guarding the UNSC captain nodded.

The aforementioned captain looked at all three of the armored giants, "I want those thugs dead Spartans!" The three nodded, the slighter built one handed her assault rifle to the captain, before pulling twin SMGs from their thigh. The other two pulled their assault rifles in to position. The one with her nodded, before they all popped out of cover firing. The hostile rounds impacted against a strange golden barrier, stopped cold.

Jerome-092 easily found his first target on the far right. The human kept his rifle trained on Jerome as he sprayed rounds. Jerome opened fire at head height, blowing through the mans barriers and ripping his head to shreds. During the seconds it took for Jerome to drop his target, two other Cerberus agents dropped to the ground. The blood flying out the back of their heads splattered on their comrades, distracting them. The Spartans easily found their next targets, splattering their brains out the back of their helmets. In under thirty seconds, only one man was left alive. The kid froze as the three Spartans had their weapons trained on the young kid.

Aria came out of cover, her barriers restored, and made her way over to the kid. His limp fingers let the rifle fall to the ground as he followed, dropping to his knees. Aria's biotic aura raged around her as she walked toward the young man.

"What did you Cerberus dogs think you were doing?" Her voice wasn't raised, it was low. A very frightening low tone.

"W-we were just following orders," his stammering voice did nothing to cool Aria down. If anything, it just made her more furious.

Jerome spoke up then, "That excuse didn't work for the Nazis of World War 2, what makes you think it will work for the terrorist group known as Cerberus?"

The kid actually snapped his head toward the Spartan, his voice angry. "We're not terrorists! We are the only ones working toward the betterment of humanity! You alien supporting freaks aren't doing anything but licking the Council's boots! We are the future of humanity!" As soon as he finished speaking, he ripped his helmet off. Underneath was a horrifying sight. The kids eyes, and the skin surrounding them, were completely replaced by cybernetic parts. "This is what the future of humanity looks like! None of you will benefit from the advancements made by Cerberus, and Omega belongs to us no-" that was as far as the kid got.

Aria yanked the kid in to the air, her biotics roaring like a fire around her. "I AM OMEGA! I own this station! Nobody is taking Omega

from me!" She turned toward captain Cutter, "I need your help, and am willing to pay a large sum for the assist."

The captain spoke up for the first time, "I'll put my Spartans and the marines I brought with me under your commanders. I expect that you have a place we can wait and talk till my marines handle the situation."

She nodded, "I'll need your, 'Spartans' was it, to clear my bar called Afterlife."

"Jerome-092, Alice-130 and Douglas-042, you have your mission. Get to it." The captain was decisive, according to what Aria could see.

"Miss T'Loak, if you'd follow me to the Pelican drop ship I came on, we can start the preliminary negotiations." She nodded as they made their way back toward the docking bay. She stopped several times along the way to issue orders to her mercenaries and the men under her command. Captain Cutter stopped to issue orders to his marines. They nodded, saluted, and made their way toward the mercenaries under Aria. Cutter turned to Aria, and held out his hand toward the docking bay. She nodded and lead the way to the Pelican.

**I'd like to apologize for the delay on this update. I honestly meant to finish it long before now, but I had to rewrite it three separate times. The other two times I wrote it, I stopped it before it could go too far. The first time, I thought about using the collectors as the reentry point. But they only have a single dreadnaught. One single ship against an enhanced four shot MAC volley. That's like putting a wolf against a newborn pug. The chances for victory are next to nothing, and that would invalidate the entire second Mass Effect game. The events of that game need to happen for my story to progress according to my outline. I want the reapers to encounter a type of technology that they've never seen before. I want them to be completely in the dark about this single ship. This ship is massively powerful. With a mass effect core used for no other purpose than to power weapons and kinetic barriers. The other ships in the entire ME galaxy use drive cores to power the whole of the ship. I couldn't allow the UNSC to be left defenseless, so That's my reason for the construction of four frigates. **

This concludes my thoughts.

End
file.